New Rules of the New Actonomy 3.0 ¹

Florian Schneider / kein mensch ist illegal

A hot Saturday at the end of June 1997: Khaled had just topped the European charts with "Aisha," and in France the *sans papiers*, people without valid immigration documents, had occupied one church after another and called upon filmmakers to shelter illegal aliens. In Germany, a prohibition upon asylum seekers' working had been issued and the criteria for deporting offenders beefed up. What had so recently called itself civic society rolled over and played dead. Early that morning, we arrived at Kassel with a car full of video equipment and were allowed, after much debate, to park in the shade of the Orangerie. Documenta X had opened the week before, and for the next hundred days, on the site of a planetarium and a museum for the history of technology, there would be a temporary media laboratory for Internet activists. No one knew what would happen next or, most importantly, why it should. The first visitors were already lining up at the main entrance. Inside the "Hybrid Workspace," a few dozen artists, media activists, unionists, refugee advocates, and antira- cists had assembled. A few hours later, we had decided upon the slogan *kein mensch ist illegal*, or "no one is illegal," set up our equipment, and opened our doors to the public.

Four years later, everything and nothing has changed. For months, the governments of the old Euro- pean nation-states have been discussing their dramatic shortages of labor, especially in high-tech and IT sectors. The EU Commissioner admitted that Europe had lost its battle against clandestine mig- ration. A debate about immigration was raging in Germany, which seemed likely to end in nothing other than reforms worsening the conditions of immigrants and a new wave of criminalization. The assertion "no one is illegal" was more topical than ever, but it was now supplemented by a second slogan: *Jeder Mensch ist ein Experte* (Everyone is an Expert) rigorously demanded global freedom of movement, including rights of entry and permanent settlement, for all human beings. This was not just a matter of questioning the prevailing clichés and trivial definitions of expertise of the analogue age. Above all, the slogan attacked the idée fixe of dividing immigrants into useful and nonuseful workforces.

Time is running out for Reformism. This is the golden age of irresistible activism. Accelerate your politics. Set a target you can reach within 3 years — and formulate the key ideas within 30 seconds. Then go out and do it. Do not despair. Get the bloody project up and then: hit hit hit. Be instantly seductive in your resistance. The moral firewalls of global capitalism are buggy as never before. Cor- porations are weakened because of their endemic dirty practices, mad for profits. The faster things change, the more radically we can act. The faster things change, the more radically we must act.

"no one is illegal" is a double negation open to various meanings. In the first place it says: don't expect us not to support refugees and immigrants just because they don't have valid residence per- mits and are thus illegal! Don't expect us not to help with entry and transit, with the procurement of work permits, with access to medical care, education and training, residence and material subsistence issues! At the same time, "no one is illegal" is not a new NGO, not a charity organization, which per- forms charitable acts out of seeming selflessness. Instead, it aims at building up networks, establis- hing contacts, exchanging knowledge, linking various strategies, and developing contextual justifica- tions in order to publicize work that in previous years had been carried out secretly, underground. It was not to celebrate the individual things we had been able to achieve, but because these few things suddenly seemed to be endangered and thus had to be supported, indeed augmented.

Radical demands are not by default signs of a dogmatic belief system (they can be, of course). If well formulated, they are strong signs, penetrating deeply into the confused postmodern subjectivity, so susceptible to catchy phrases, logos, and brand names. The green-liberal idea of slowly changing capitalism from within no longer works. Not because the Third Way parties have "betrayed" the cause. No. Simply because their project is running out of time. Global systems are in a state of permanent revolution, and so is subversive politics. Society is changing much faster than any of its institutions, including corporations. No one can keep up. There is no time anymore for "rational" planning. The duration of a plan, the time necessary for its implementation, is simply no longer there. This mechanism turned the baby boomers into such unbearable regressive control freaks. There is no more time to go through the entire trajectory from research to implementation. Policy is reduced to panic response.

Our numbers were few and our endeavors began slowly. We have learned a great deal and have tried from the beginning to use new means of communication for our purposes. In the space of a few days at Documenta X, we were able — thanks above all to emails, mailing lists, and websites — to build an informal network that included local points of contact in almost all of Germany's larger cities. Repeatedly over the past few years, major exhibitions, invitations to museums and galleries, independent events, tent colonies, and conferences have provided temporary headquarters for campaigns with clearly defined short-term goals. "no one is illegal" has no official or permanent structure. There is no one who would be willing or able to represent or be responsible for the network as a whole. Tactical considerations inspired this sort of construction, the aims being to avoid promising what could not be delivered or realized, to avoid political infighting, and to avoid the homogenization of a process that from its inception and at heart was supposed to serve a variety of purposes. Above all, "no one is illegal" is a slogan available for use to all who are attracted to it and want to contribute their specific knowledge and skills to the totality of its activities.

Government policy is reduced to panic response. For the complex society its enemies are the blueprints of five years ago. The future is constantly being redefined and renegotiated. Global systems are in a state of permanent flux between revolution and reaction — and so are subversive politics. Society is changing much faster than any of its institutions can handle. In short: no one can keep up, and here lies the competitive advantage of today's mobile actonomists.

"no one is illegal" is not a plea to government lawmakers for a relaxation of legal restrictions, a bit of humanitarian consideration in scandalous individual cases, nor a concrete proposal for bringing populations under better control by liberalizing or deregulating certain aspects of global migration. "no one is illegal" is something that goes without saying, a platitude, albeit one that can entail dramatic consequences. There is no need to spill much ink about the practical, on-site work. The crux of the matter is heartfelt, immediate, and uncomplicated action. Our approach is goal-oriented — the only thing that matters is the concrete improvement of the situation of people without clearly defined residence status. The campaign commenced at a time when, throughout Europe, the legal punishments for "illegal entry" and "illegal residence" were being drastically increased. "no one is illegal" cites a text by Elie Wiesel, who many years ago posed the question: "How can a person be illegal?" It is only against the backdrop of the official policy of zero immigration and systematic criminalization of foreigners that the slogan acquires its special meaning. Its radicalism, however, is not just a matter of context. It is put into practice not by the many small individual gestures of support and help, but by the mass crossing of borders that people undertake for whatever reasons.

Instead of lamenting the disappearance of politics, the public, the revolution, etc., today's activists are focusing on the weakest link defining the overall performance of the system: the point where the corporate image materializes in the real world and leaves its ubiquitous and abstract omnipresence.

Shortcut the common deliberations about the dichotomy between real and virtual. Get into more sophisticated dialectics. It's all linked anyway, with power defining the rules of access to resources (space, information, or capital). Throw your pie, write your code. Visit their annual stockholder meeting, and do your goddamned research first. What counts is the damage done on the symbolic level, either real or virtual.

"Activism" was something of a foreign word in Germany when "no one is illegal" first began. Traditional labels like "human rights supporters" or "politically committed individuals," "antiracist initiatives" or "solidarity movements," had proved to be failures. *Aktivismus*, borrowed from English, suggested itself as an alternative, containing the idea of activity, an approach that was as offensive as it was constructive and that signaled the greatest possible degree of flexibility and self-confidence. The trick was to avoid despair in a seemingly hopeless situation, to explode smug contentment and cynicism, to reject the role of the do-gooder, to go beyond mere technical expertise and simply offering services, and to match radical aspirations with a practice that developed new, if also precarious, forms of subjectivity. What makes activism so irresistible is the acceleration that accompanies its initial phase. All efforts are directed toward a goal, with every movement adding to the whole and leading all the more quickly to real progress. No time for looking back — that is what makes activism so appealing and exciting.

The new actonomy, equipped with pies and laptops, consists of thousands of bigger and smaller activities, which are all by themselves meaningful, manageable, and sustainable. For this we do not need a General Plan, a singular portal website, let alone a Party. It is enough to understand the new dynamics — and to use them. Create and disseminate your message with all available logics, tools, and media. The new actonomy involves a rigorous application of networking methods. Its diversity challenges the development of nonhierarchical, decentralized, and deterritorialized applets and applications.

The border camps are without doubt one of the most successful concepts developed in conjunction with "no one is illegal." Since the summer of 1998, twelve such action camps have taken place along various borders in Europe and North America. Starting with the borderline rave and border-opening action near Görlitz at the German-Polish border, and continuing to the second borderhacking festival staged last August on the beach at Tijuana along the US-Mexico border, the tent colonies are a persuasive example of globally distributed network activism. For several days in the summer of 2001, some 2,000 participants succeeded in disrupting operations at Frankfurt airport as part of a protest against the internment camps on airport grounds and the approximately 40,000 deportations that take place there annually. Whether at the G-8 summit in Genoa or at the Straits of Gibraltar, on the Polish-Byelorussian or the Slovenian-Croatian border — in various contexts, with various goals and from constantly shifting perspectives, activists attempt to disrupt a postmodern border regime that makes the international transfer of money, goods, and capital ever easier, while choking off the global flow of refugees, immigrants, and other migrant populations.

As is the case in most political, social, and cultural areas, network technologies have replaced traditional forms of asserting authority on national borders. Checks now take place practically everywhere in real time. Chip cards, biometric systems, electronic collars regulate access to proprietary, privileged, or otherwise restricted areas and collate images of human movement in gigantic databases. The surveillance of the electronically equipped border by means of heat, infrared, radar, and satellite technology has undergone a dramatic change in significance. Today's borders are not so much about racist permission and refusal of entry as about user profiling. The ultimate aim of postmodern border management is above all the filtering of presumably useful from nonuseful immigrants.

In the spring of 2002, further noborder camps will be staged in front of a refugee camp in the Australian desert, and a planned European-wide camp at Strasbourg the following July should provide another temporary highlight. In front of the European Parliament, the European Court of Human Rights, and the headquarters of the Schengen Information System,[2] activists will engage in a whole spectrum of actions, from distributing information to disruption, pranks, fakes, and border jamming. The communicative and networking levels of the movement will also be further developed within the European context.

Invent and connect as many intentions, motivations, causalities as possible. Nowadays activists use multilayered and multiple voice languages that extend far beyond the immediate purpose of a campaign or a concrete struggle, and in doing so, create a vision much larger than what is accessible right at the moment. This mechanism requires a reassessment of the rhizomatic micro-politics that sprang up in response to the centralized macro-politics of the decaying communist parties in the 1970s.

The political arena has dissolved into thousands of fragments, and yet it is precisely in this chaos that network activism can break new ground with novel forms of political articulation and activity. What the various approaches have in common is that they are extremely flexible, operate within a tactical and strategic pluralism, are concerned with formulating a contemporary concept of solidarity and self-determination, and seek to link immediate local conflicts to global issues. The constructive result is a nonorganized movement of movements — a self-determined, networked thinking that explicitly promotes various approaches and connections. As a form of social engagement directly relating to the realm of production, this is constitutive for the collective appropriation of knowledge and power.

Laws of the semiotic guerrilla: hit and run, draw and withdraw, code and delete. Postulate precise and modest demands, which allows your foe to step back without losing face. Social movements from the last century opposed the nation-state and disclaimed its power. In the new actonomy, activists struggle against corporations and new forms of global sovereignty. The goal is obviously not so much to gain institutional political power, but to change the way things are moving — and why. The principle aim is to make power ridiculous, unveil its corrupt nature in the most powerful, beautiful, and aggressive symbolic language, then step back in order to make space for changes to take effect. Let others do that job, if they wish. There is no need for a direct dialogue in this phase. Exchanges on mediated levels will do. Complex societies have plenty of mediators and interfaces. Use them. Indirect contact with power-to-be does not affect your radical agenda as long as you maintain and upgrade your own dignity, both as an acting individual and as a group.

"Deportation.Class" is the name of an autonomous campaign that developed from the network "no one is illegal" in the summer of 1999, after four people, over the space of a few months, were killed by police escorts during deportation proceedings at airports or aboard planes.[3] Everyone who flies knows that the seating policies of commercial airlines follow a cleverly designed system of crass and fine distinctions. At the front of the aircraft are the business nomads who possess not only sufficient frequent-flyer miles but the right sort of passport. Behind them are the masses who may have booked promptly but do not seem truly cut out for earning money. In the last rows are people who may not have booked their own tickets at all — people who aren't flying of their own free will, but who sit there in handcuffs, restrained or sedated, on board to be deported.

The specific tactic of the "Deportation.Class" campaign consisted of finding a weak spot or, to use a different metaphor, the weakest link in the chain. It first set its sights on the Lufthansa corporation, whose worldwide network of routes allows it to transport people to any country on earth. The "Deportation.Class" campaign began with a competition of ideas to create a corpus of parodic slogans

whose graphic realization seemed particularly advantageous or felicitous. The collective brainstorming before the official public launch of the campaign at the International Tourism Exchange in March 2000 in Berlin resulted in an explosion of ideas. Online and off, on websites and in print, in film spots and short animation, the campaign progressed in various directions. It was not necessary to develop a single "corporate identity" — the immense costs of this were left to Lufthansa with its highly paid employees and professional resources. The activists merely played the role of communications guerrillas, conserving their strength so as always to appear where the enemy least suspected. The activity, however, was theater, not war. In actions that were more like performances than traditional political demonstrations, the activists took every opportunity to publicize the practice of transporting deportees on commercial flights, which had in the meantime also come under judicial scrutiny. Activists created confusion at travel agencies and ticket counters, at firm-run training centers and flight schools, at trade conventions and the Lufthansa partner day at the World's Fair 2000. At the Hamburg airport, for example, activists disguised themselves as employees of an advertising agency, purportedly conducting a survey among Lufthansa passengers as to their readiness to be reseated from business or tourist into deportation class. Most of those asked did not categorically refuse: "If it's cheaper, why not?"

Information leaflets were often torn angrily from the hands of the activists, who were used to dealing with far greater harassment, and some surprising feedback flooded into Lufthansa call centers. The employees there presumably had to receive some additional advance training in denial, after prank promotional material began appearing in travel agencies advertising the "deportation class." "Book with the Lufthansa deportation class," read the pamphlets, which were produced in German, English, and Spanish. "We are offering a thirty percent price reduction on all flights since a separate zone has been reserved in our aircraft for the transport of deported asylum seekers." "Waiting-list priority" and an "increased baggage allowance" were also promised. The Lufthansa corporation had no choice but to call a hasty press conference on April 11, 2000 and distance itself from the "cynical and inhumane proceedings." Needless to say, they meant the pamphlets, not the deportations. Score one for the activists of "no one is illegal," as the tabloid newspaper *Bild* ran the now legendary headline: "Poor Lufthansa!"

In the coming months, the managing directors of the formerly state-run airline decided to play deaf — without much success. Following the lead of the unions, the pilots' organization Cockpit endorsed the idea that flying should be voluntary. Cockpit advised its members, who represent the sole authority on planes while airborne, not to transport anyone who did not actually want to fly. The results that can be achieved with goal-oriented protest and efficient tactics became evident in July 2000, when the Hungarian airline TAROM, which had carried out deportations every Tuesday from Frankfurt airport, did an abrupt about-face after the simultaneous occupation of all its offices in Germany and canceled the weekly chartered flight used for them. As the reason for its change in policy, TAROM cited its desire not to be targeted by the "Deportation.Class" campaign.

These days a well-designed content virus can easily reach millions overnight. Invest all your time to research how to design a robust meme which can travel through time and space, capable of operating within a variety of cultural contexts. The relationship between "small is beautiful" and "Subversive economies of scale" is constantly shifting. Low-tech money-free projects are charming, but in most cases lack the precision and creative power to strike at society's weakest link. Be ready to work with money. You will need it for the temporary set-up.

In the weeks leading up to Lufthansa's annual shareholder meeting, media reports were dominated by a promised online demonstration, which had been announced to Cologne police and other authorities and which was to commence with a symbolic mouse click on June 15, 2001 at precisely 10

o'clock in the morning, in front of the city's main arena. Simultaneously, from 10 to 12 a.m., the Lufthansa server was to be overloaded — or, at least, its response time significantly slowed down. This was something of a premiere, although it was not the first time that the metaphor "online demonstration" had been used for an electronic gathering. It was a software that supported mass protest in which people across the world could easily participate, akin to a denial-of-service attack, except that the goals, means, and schedule had been openly announced and were both locally and temporally restricted. The point was certainly not to inflict maximum damage but to effect a symbolic condensation: the long-awaited synchronicity of online and offline; the media-savvy dramatization of a just cause, which could not have been publicized and disseminated so broadly with traditional means; the trial run for a controversial, if promising, form of action that both visualized and globalized protest; and, as paradoxical as it might sound, a hybrid of immaterial sabotage and digital demonstration.

In the aftermath, both sides claimed victory. The organizers of the online demonstration emphasized that the Lufthansa homepage was virtually inaccessible for two hours, illustrating this with some nicely drawn diagrams. Lufthansa spokespeople admitted that some jams had occurred but spoke likewise of the effectiveness of their defensive strategy, which focused on alternative telephone line capacities. Whole sub-networks were apparently placed on the Web where critical requests for information were detected. The logical consequence was that those who protested there automatically had success, if only in their own eyes.

On the symbolic level as well, there were two victors. The online demonstration, which had been explicitly and primarily concerned with attracting maximum publicity for the cause, drew enormous international attention to the "Deportation.Class" protest against Lufthansa, far beyond what would have been possible with traditional methods. Articles in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, wire reports speeding around the globe, massive debates online over a set-up by television stations and print publications — soon every article, whether in magazines or dailies, the Internet or provincial newspapers, was reporting on the Lufthansa shareholder meeting with catchy headlines about the online demonstration. On the other hand, the Web technicians at Lufthansa could proudly point out that they had successfully controlled the damage from an "aggressive attack." The server did not collapse, as many protesters secretly hoped, but remained online — if at the cost of temporary local unavailability. Even the immense costs incurred by the Lufthansa technicians could be justified. The firm was able to demonstrate, albeit grudgingly, a certain competence in dealing with new challenges.

Think in terms of efficiency. Use the staff and infrastructure on the site of your foe. Acting in the new actonomy means cutting the preliminaries and getting to the point straightaway. A campaign does not rely on one's own forces alone, but on those of one allies and opponents as well. Outsourcing is a weapon. It is a means of giving someone else the problems you cannot solve yourself Remember that you won't get very far without a proper infrastructure such as offices, servers, legal frameworks to receive and pay money, etc. However, you can also treat these institutional requirements as flexible units. You do not need to own them, the only thing you need is temporary access so that you can set up the equipment necessary for that particular project.

The nice thing about virtual reality is not only that both sides can be right in claiming success, but that the final tabulation of pluses and minuses has little meaning, to say nothing of it driving events. It is a typical win-win situation. According to the concepts of Net activism, however, the matter does not end there. The main challenge of virtual forms of protest has an entirely pragmatic dimension. The materiality of virtual protest resides in the interactivity, the communication between networked

activists who are not divided into senders and receivers, but function simultaneously as participants and organizers. What does networking actually mean in this context? Net activism, as rudimentary as the genre might be at present, essentially proceeds on three levels.

For starters there is the immediate networking within a movement. Communication gets translated from the analogue to the digital medium: mailing lists and communication before, during, and after them, as well as static websites, conceived as bulletin boards or archives for the activists themselves. This primary form of networking leads to the creation of virtual communities, which do not differ greatly from offline communities except insofar as the individuals concerned do not necessarily ever meet face to face, even though many do. A further outgrowth of this is the step-by-step discovery of the practical applications of new technologies.

A second level is concerned with splicing together the space between movements. This is a matter of networking between people from different contexts, the inspiring and motivating surroundings in which new forms of activity can be discovered and developed: campaigns, meta-databases, diverse activities settled on the borders between the online and offline world. Insofar as interfaces are concerned, issues of subjectivity and interactivity become decisive: mutual offers of help, technical and intellectual support instead of division of labor, collaboration, open sources, and collective productivity. The goal is to connect the greatest number of possible approaches so that virtuality, with its endless capacity for activity, yields a greater use value than when individuals, groups, or movements are left to their own devices.

The third level consists of the virtual archiving of unanticipated and incalculable movements. The ambition is to use the Web as a platform for purely virtual encounters, ones that no longer or ever more infrequently refer to a romantic offline reality: e-protests such as online demonstrations, electronic civil disobedience, immaterial or digital sabotage as the result of future social conflicts. It is an oxymoron that contains an enormous potential.

Act in a definite space and with a definite force. Dramaturgy is all that matters. Precision campaigns consist of distinct episodes with a beginning and end, an either smooth or harsh escalation and a final showdown. Accept the laws of appearance and disappearance. Don't get stuck in structures that are on the decline. Be ready to move on, taking with you the (access to) infrastructure of the previous round. Action is taking place in a variety of locations and thus refers in a positive way to a new stage of people's globalization from below. One that is not just an empty, endlessly extended market, but full of energy.

At the moment, the great challenge seems to be a redefinition of sabotage, not in the traditional, destructive sense, but as constructive, innovative, and creative practice. The pathological aspect of traditionally understood protest militancy resides to a great extent in its auto-destructiveness: trying to give others a bad conscience, burning down one's own neighborhood, striving for radicalism without reflection and desire for communication, and smugly fetishizing repression. Sabotage is the practical antithesis to this, being derived from the word *sabot*, a wooden shoe secretly placed inside a machine so as to block production. The interruption aims at decreasing human efficiency so that the resultant material losses direct attention to concrete demands or a general dissatisfaction. Classical sabotage, as it evolved toward the end of the 19th century, could take three forms: a reduction in the quantity of either production or services, or the application of specialist knowledge to attack the quality of production.

Refuse to be blackmailed. If attacked, take one step aside or ahead. Don't panic. Take all the options into account. No one needs cyberheroes, you are not a lone hacker anymore. The attack may be done by a single person but, remember, we are many. The corporate response may be harsher than you expect. It may be better to avoid a direct confrontation, but don't trust the media and the mediators. Ignore their advice. In the end you are just another news item for them. If trouble hits you in the face, scale down, retreat, reorganize, get your network up, dig deep into the far corners of the Net — and then launch the counter-campaign.

Like strikes, sabotage in its classical form takes direct aim at the profits of a company in order to ensure the fulfillment of certain demands. Immaterial sabotage, on the other hand, is directed at the *image* of a corporation. In contrast to the boycotts organized by social movements of the 1980s, which kept participants in their status as consumers voting with their wallets, immaterial sabotage taps the creativity and productivity, the collaboration and collectivity unleashed among its wandering, ineffable, mutually networked participants. The goal is not to get the greatest number of people behind you but to achieve directly a change in or amelioration of a certain condition. It is therefore felicitous to concentrate on the weakest link in the chain, the image or global corporate identity of a concern, which can be attacked with a wide variety of tactics and techniques.

Historically, in cases where the right to strike either was rendered ineffective or was denied to workers, sabotage proved to be an appropriate, if illegal, means of firm-internal confrontation. Hardly a bad legacy to take up in a situation where it is clear that what the powers-that-be envision under globalization cannot be effected in the long term by scattered street battles before convention halls. Too many things have changed too quickly in the world for the long-overdue redefinition of political practice and theory not to revive experiences from other historical watersheds. New concepts have to be developed and old ones injected with new content, while struggles need to interact with absolute immediacy, regardless of whether they are old or new, and no matter where they take place and how they end up. How many people participate is just as irrelevant now as it was during the New York barmen's strike at the end of the 19th century. It was through the free, indirect speech about working conditions that patrons became so disgusted and the industry quickly caved in to the demands of a badly organized union. What went down in labor history as "open mouth sabotage" provided the cornerstone a hundred years later for the Net activism of the "McLibel" campaign. The website, on which McDonald's critics worldwide provided material supporting two pamphleteers accused in London of libeling the corporation, was one of the most visited sites of the mid-'90s. The "Deportation. Class" campaign certainly had a more difficult task since the phrase "denial of service" was understood literally: the aim was for Lufthansa to refuse to transport prisoners. What is needed is what during the 1980s was called "imaginative forms of resistance," itself something of a euphemism. Today, the conditions exist to create the material basis for fulfilling this almost forgotten promise.

Program and compile subject-oriented campaigns! These days, a lot of people talk about a global uprising, which is only in the beginning stages and definitely not limited to the so-called battles against the three acronyms: WTO, WB, and IMF But the urgent question of that movement is: What new types of subjectivity will emerge from the current struggles? Everyone knows what's to be done, but who knows what we are fighting for and why? Maybe it doesn't matter anymore: net.activism has a charming fragility. In the end it means permanently revising and redefining all goals.

The 20th century was not the century of refugees, as has been so often claimed, but the century of borders. Borders establish personality, create or change subjectivity. Illegal crossing of boundaries destroys what previously was and now lies in the past: professors are turned into cleaners, people

with countless talents and enormous experience become refugees and migrants, compelled to tell stories to the authorities of flight, torture, persecution, starvation, and misery, and thus pigeonholed — even in the rhetoric of well-intentioned supporters — into the role of the victim.

The slogan "Everyone is an Expert" connects rhetorically with the double negation "no one is illegal," turning the latter's simplicity, redundancy, and necessary understatement into a political tactic of over-affirmation. At the February 2000 computer convention CEBIT, in Hanover, after a quarter century of a full stop on immigration, a loudly trumpeted policy of zero migration, and an increasingly brutal regime of EU borders, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder declared that an acute shortage in qualified personnel in the IT sector demanded a liberalization of Germany's complicated laws concerning foreigners. The call for "Indian IT experts" made the rounds throughout Europe in a matter of weeks, and soon other sectors of the economy joined the protest against institutionalized hostility toward immigration, which until then had only been whispered behind cupped hands. Politicians and administrators reacted with confusion to the new situation. The results in Germany were a host of new policies that added to the chaos of already existing laws and a number of election campaigns featuring despicable wordplay such as "foreigners we can use instead of foreigners who use us." That slogan in particular sought to exploit the Western-European xenophobia of the 1990s, with its German catchphrase "the boat is full."

"Everyone is an Expert" may seem at first glance to be a tactical exaggeration, one which on top of that plays upon Joseph Beuys's statement that everyone is an artist. In the first instance, the project was to establish a database, allowing people legally excluded from the official labor market in Germany to publicize their knowledge and skills and thus to achieve a social respect systematically denied to them by institutions and the economy. The idea was to link people who possessed or were looking for a wide variety of skills. In the meantime, the intrinsically connected issues of freedom of movement and informational self-determination have emerged at the forefront. Anyone wishing to use the database "Everyone is an Expert" has the opportunity to input multimedia, digital self-portraits into the system without regard to profitability, usefulness, identity, or confirmation. "Everyone is an Expert" is characterized by voluntary, self-determined associations, blurred relations, ornamental variety, and multiplications in various strategic contexts, which all draw attention to the incalculable difference and holism of all productive practices. The plan is to develop various splice areas that are open, mobile, and universally accessible. In the accompanying exhibitions and catalogues, a selection of the content collected thus far will be prepared so as to disseminate as much information as possible about direct and indirect applications and possible uses. As part of the events, self-determined experts will also elucidate the background, conditions, and implications of the project.

The revolution will be open source or not! Self-determination is something you should share. As soon as you feel a certain strength in a certain field, you can make your power productive as positive, creative, and innovative force. That power opens up new capacities, producing again and again unexpected and incalculable effects.

Today, solidarity consists of communicating struggle. Networking has to be based on the uniqueness and diversity of various practices of resistance. The burning questions of this movement of movements are as follows. How can these diverse practices be brought together without being homogenized? How can commonalities be found — not *despite* but precisely as diversity — so as to allow for creativity and constructiveness? How can the wide variety of origins, perspectives, and motivations be not only respected but promoted, simultaneously and universally?

Collaborations like the noborder network, in which activists from more than twenty European countries have been linked up, have as little to do with mere exchange of information as with claims to being representative. Cooperation takes place on the basis of the enormous differences that persist, despite all harmonizing efforts, within EU policies on migration and asylum. Experiences must be shared, talents represented, and knowledge exchanged, if we are to keep up with the situation. Those who work together soon notice how fruitful it can be to share existing capacities and resources in order to solve problems, carry out joint action, begin collective processes, coordinate with other networks, and constantly recoordinate one's own activities.

Ignore history. Don't refer to any of your favorite predecessors. Hide your admiration for authors, artists, and familiar styles. You do not need to legitimize yourself by quoting the right theorist or rapper. Be unscrupulously modern (meaning: ignore organized fashion, you are busy with something else, anyway). Create and disseminate your message with all available logics, tools, and media. The new actonomy involves a rigorous application of networking methods. Its diversity challenges the development of nonhierarchical, decentralized, and deterritorialized applets and applications. In the meanwhile, leave the preaching of the techno religion to others. Hide your admiration for everything new and cool. Just use it. Take the claim on the fitture away from corporations. Remember: they are the dinosaurs.

What is new about the new actonomy? In the end, what is considered new today has less to do with something entirely unknown and never seen before than with the universality of constant change. Even global transformations are eventually exhausted, both spatially and temporally. And when the end of the end (for example, the end of history) is reached, everything that can happen or must be done must go back to the beginning. Happily, such a new beginning encompasses far more now than ever before. It is high time to scroll, to look both forward and backward, to step aside and to think ahead.

Read as much business literature as possible and don't be afraid it may affect you. It will. Have enough ethics in your guts that you can deal with that bit of ideology. Remember that activism and entrepreneurial spirit have a lot in common. So what? Benefit from your unlimited capacity for metamorphosis. With the right spirit, you can survive any appropriation. Free yourself from the idea that enemy concepts compromise the struggle. You don't have to convince yourself; or your foe. The challenge is to involve those who have not yet joined the struggle. The challenge is to use resources which may not belong to you, but which are virtually yours.

Borders are there to be crossed. Their significance first appears when they are violated. The types of violations states try to prevent reveals the character of the society they harbor. The battle against borders is a battle against infrared cameras, plastic handcuffs, and dragnet sweeps, against restricted horizons, resentment, and racism. More than ever, it is also a struggle for the long-overdue redefinition of the public sphere as jointly used space and mutually determined time. To the extent that so-called globalization does nothing more than establish new borders and distinctions between people in order to realize boundless profits, the corruption of the global capitalist regime becomes more and more apparent. Thus the struggle against borders becomes a truly constructive conflict over the principle of open sources and free, equal, global access. Access to the right to have rights. Access to the material goods necessary for survival and the immaterial resources that represent the basis of creativity and creative work. Access to the communicative networks in which knowledge is circulated. Everything else is in the stars, and that is the way it should be. Nothing can predict how and where people will determine their destiny when it lies in their own hands.

Translated from the German by Jefferson Chase

References

1   This text is based upon the lecture held during the platform in Vienna as version 1.0. The current version was discussed, extended, developed, and reconstituted on many levels and in cooperation with various individuals inside and outside the campaign "kein mensch ist illegal" ("no one is illegal"). The sections in italics have been published as version 2.0 under the co-authorship of Geert Lovink. Continuing versions are planned for the future and will be published under open content license at http://new.actonomy.org.

2   The Schengen Information System is a huge database designed to collect information about stolen vehicles and illegal immigrants, and was recently expanded to include political activists as well. See http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l33020.htm.

3   All were asylum-seekers. Nigerian Marcus Omofuma died in May 1999 during a deportation operation on a Balkan Air flight from Vienna to Nigeria; one witness reported that police had "wrapped the entire upper part of his body and arms with adhesive tape like a mummy stuck to the seat." That same month, Sudanese national Aamir Ageeb was killed aboard a Lufthansa flight; his arms and legs had been bound by German federal border police, a motorcycle helmet had been placed on his head, and his head had been forced between his knees. In March 1999, Palestinian Khaled Abu Zarifa died of suffocation at Zurich-Kloten airport after police guards placed adhesive over his mouth and strapped him into a wheelchair. In September 1998, Semira Adamu, a Nigerian seeking asylum in Belgium, died as the result of abuse inflicted by police escorts at Brussels airport. In an earlier incident, in August 1994, Kola Bankole, another Nigerian national, died of heart failure aboard a Lufthansa flight from Frankfurt after being restrained, sedated, and gagged by federal border police.